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NEWS RELEASE

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**SHOSHONE COUNTY BENEFITS FROM \$16.9 MILLION DOLLAR INVESTMENT
FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE**

Last year, Shoshone County residents and businesses received \$16.9 million from Department of Health & Welfare programs that help people in need. The investment benefits every one of the county's 13,000 residents. Of Idaho's 44 counties, Shoshone County ranks number 3 in per capita outlay of Health & Welfare dollars.

The disbursement of state and federal tax dollars amounts to \$1,302 for every man, woman and child residing in Shoshone County. This includes citizens who may not receive a single direct service from the Department. The statewide average is \$839 per capita.

The Department invested \$1.15 billion in Idaho communities in 2004. These funds came from Medicaid, additional payments to hospitals, Food Stamps, the Idaho Child Care Program, the Women, Infants and Children nutritional program, foster care and a variety of other assistance programs.

"This is an investment for all Shoshone County residents," says Health & Welfare Director Karl Kurtz. "These are tax dollars put to good use because they are used to help people become healthy and productive and less dependent on government assistance. This money goes go to foster care for children in crisis, substance abuse treatment for adults and adolescents, improvements and operations at the local hospital, and dozens of other badly needed services."

“This is as much about sustaining communities as it is investing,” adds Kurtz. “By providing programs that support people, we are helping communities and their residents build the endurance and strength they need to remain vital. Everyone profits from this investment, not just those who use Department programs. This isn’t just me pounding my chest. That’s what community leaders tell us.”

Shoshone County Commission Chairman Jon Cantamessa says, “The Food Stamp program has a big impact. You can see it in the grocery stores. In our county, a disproportionately large percentage of our population qualifies for Food Stamps. It’s the economy — and our (medical) indigent costs have outrun the available funds.”

“Medicaid is important to us,” adds Commissioner Jim Vergobbi. “Our indigent care fund is a big, big thing in this county. (Medicaid) helps keep fund from getting bigger.”

Last year, the Department’s Medicaid Division spent \$13.7 million on health care for residents of the county. A large share of the dollars go to Shoshone Medical Center. In addition to regular inpatient and outpatient fees paid for Medicaid clients, the hospital received \$253,000 in extra payments called Federal Upper Payment Limits. This program compensates hospitals for low Medicaid reimbursement. The extra money can be used for any purpose so anyone using the hospital can potentially benefit from those dollars, not just Medicaid clients.

“This money is great. It’s super for everybody. It’s marvelous for us,” says Hospital Administrator Gary Moore. “It helps with cash flow. We built a new replacement facility and so this helps us maintain our margins and meet our obligations.” All Medicaid payments to the hospital totaled \$934,000.

Shoshone County residents received \$1.6 million in Food Stamps to help feed their families — \$200,000 more than in 2003. The Food Stamp program served 1,700 county residents in 2004 — 200 more than in the previous year.

Department spending helps people, and it has an upside for business, according to Idaho economist John Church. “This is not lost money. The spending is an investment. It goes back into the economy. If an employer came to town and spent this much money we would be elated. People need to remember that a big chunk of this is federal money which is a huge return on our taxes. This comes back and helps stimulate the economy and it helps people.”

Kurtz adds, “Not only is the Department money a human investment, but it creates jobs and maintains healthy businesses. These dollars recycle numerous times in each community and help us keep the high quality of life we enjoy in Idaho. This is a wise use of taxpayer dollars because the money spent in the community often stays in the community. The dollars are spent again and again to help create jobs and an infrastructure that provides healthy and safe neighborhoods.”

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(**Editors:** Interviews are available on request. Contact Ross Mason at 334-0693 or Regional Director Michelle Britton at 755-3772 for more information.)

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investment in every Idaho County
can be found online at
<http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov>**